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TO: G/Mr. Johnson
FROM: S/S W. H. Brubeck
NUMBER: 17367
DATE: October 25, 1962
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Signature Record

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Reviewed by: Elijah Kelly Jr.
4-26-68
DATE: October 16, 1962
5:00 p.m.
White House
Part I

ACDATA: Akalovsky:cb 10/21/62 EYES ONLY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

White House approved, Memorandum of Conversation
10/23/62

SUBJECT: Germany and Berlin; Possible Visit by Khrushchev

PARTICIPANTS:

US

USSR

The President
The Secretary
Ambassador Thompson
Mr. Hillenbrand

Foreign Minister Gromyko
Mr. Semenov
Ambassador Dobrynin
Mr. Sukhodrev

COMES TO:

P - Mr. Manning	Amembassy London-Amb. Johnson
INR/D - Mr. Hilsman	USUN-Amb. Stevenson
IO - Mr. Cleveland	White House-Mr. Bundy
Amb. Moscow-Amb. Kholer	DDO/OSI - Secretary McNamara
Embassy Paris-Amb. Bohlen	DDO/USA - Mr. Nichols
Embassy Bonn-Amb. Dowling	

Mr. Gromyko opened the conversation by stating that the Head of the Soviet Government, Mr. Khrushchev had asked him to convey his greetings best wishes to the President, to Mr. Kennedy, and to all of the Kennedy family. Mrs. Khrushchev joined in these greetings.

The President thanked for these wishes.

Mr. Gromyko continued that he wished to thank the President for giving him time to meet with him and exchange views on certain matters. He stated he had to state the policy and the views of the Soviet Government in a number of important questions. Subject to the President's approval, he suggested he might take these questions one by one and listen to the comments the President might wish to make on each of them individually.

The President said this was all right with him.

Mr. Gromyko then stated that Mr. Khrushchev had instructed him to take the opportunity of his trip to the United States and to convey to the President that Mr. Khrushchev continued to hope that the President's efforts, like his own, would be directed toward the elimination of differences and points of difference between our two countries. Such elimination had been and continued to be the invariable desire of the Soviet Government and of the Soviet people. The Soviet Government regretted that no agreement had been reached in the course of the exchanges of views between the US and the USSR on this question.

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of a German peace treaty and of normalizing the West Berlin situation on the basis of such a treaty. Unfortunately, the latest meetings with the Secretary had not changed the situation. No progress had been made in spite of the fact that, as had been also stressed by US representatives, West Berlin and its status did not present a major problem and was not a vital issue for the United States or its Allies. Indeed, the West Berlin situation was a legacy of the last war. The Soviet Government had stated on a number of occasions that the Soviet Union had no direct vital interests in West Berlin and did not need West Berlin. The Soviet Government deemed it necessary to conclude a German peace treaty and resolve the West Berlin problem on the basis of such a treaty by declaring West Berlin a free and demilitarized city; such a solution would meet the interests of world peace. Of course, the Soviet Union could never agree to West Berlin's remaining a NATO base, to a continuation of the presence of occupation troops of the three Western powers and to the maintenance of the occupation regime in West Berlin; nor could it agree to West Berlin's remaining a hotbed of aggressive explosion. The fact was that presence of occupation forces of the three Western powers in West Berlin yielded nothing to the West strategically, and this proved that there was no reason for keeping those forces in West Berlin.

Mr. Gromyko then said that the Soviet Government had already indicated that it would do nothing with regard to West Berlin before the US election, unless it was compelled to do otherwise by the activities of the other side. However, the Soviet Government proceeded from the fact that it was necessary to hold an active dialogue in November to bring about concrete results with regard to a German peace treaty and to the normalization of the West Berlin situation on the basis of such a treaty. The Soviet Government would like to hope that at that time an understanding concerning a German peace treaty, including the question of the forces of the three Western powers and of the status of West Berlin, would at last be reached. If there should be no such understanding, the Soviet Government would be compelled, and Mr. Gromyko wished to emphasize the word "compelled", to sign, together with a number of other states, a peace treaty with the GDR without an understanding with the Western Powers. The Soviet Union would also be compelled to take such steps as were integrally linked with a peace settlement, steps of which the United States Government and the President personally had been informed on a number of occasions, including by Mr. Khrushchev personally. The Soviet Government proceeded from the assumption that the United States Government would take such steps as being only inevitable in this connection and would understand that they represented a peaceful effort. As to the threats that could be heard in the United States in connection with the possibility of the USSR's signing a peace treaty with the GDR in the event that no understanding with

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the West was reached, i.e., in the event that the Soviet Union acted as the West had acted with respect to Japan, the Soviet Government wished to emphasize once again that such threats could not produce the effect desired by those who made them. Threats had no effect on the USSR whatsoever; instead of indulging in them it would be better to root out the remnants of World War II.

Mr. Gromyko said he was speaking on behalf of the Soviet Government as fully as Mr. Khrushchev had spoken in Vienna when he spoke in favor of a peaceful solution of the problem of a German peace settlement. Mr. Gromyko recalled that the President had said that he appreciated frankness. The Soviet Government also appreciated frankness, because frank conversations were the shortest way to understanding and clarification of respective positions. Mr. Khrushchev had said, the NATO military base and the occupation regime in West Berlin represented a rotten tooth which must be pulled out, and no one would be harmed by that. One could not take seriously assertions that it was necessary to maintain a NATO base in West Berlin in order to protect the West Berlin population. As a matter of fact, the Soviet Government was in favor of respecting the freedom of the West Berlin population, but no NATO base was needed for that purpose.

Mr. Gromyko continued that the Soviet Government had some specific points concerning what had been discussed in the course of the US/USSR exchanges of views. Recently, in conversations with Lord Home and the Secretary, it had been suggested that an international air access authority be established. It had also been stated that such an arrangement would involve respect for the sovereignty of the GDR. The Soviet Union was prepared to take account of this suggestion and proposed the following two alternatives: (a) creation of an international arbitration authority to be concerned with all types of access; the Soviet views on such an authority had been stated in detail to the Secretary in earlier conversations; or (b) creation of such an authority to deal solely with air access. The latter was a new proposal, and it could be discussed in greater detail later tonight with the Secretary. In making this step forward toward the position of the United States and the United Kingdom, the Soviet Government proceeded on the assumption that at the same time a solution to all other problems relating to a German peace settlement and West Berlin would be found.

Mr. Gromyko then recalled the Secretary's remarks during the last meeting to the effect that United States favored the development of contacts between West and East Germans. The Soviet Union, he said, was also in favor of such contacts because they would promote alleviation of the situation in Germany and Europe as a whole. However, it went without saying that the

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development of such contacts did not mean solution of the main problem. Mr. Gromyko went on to say that the Soviet Union was also prepared to take into account US views regarding unification and it was prepared to include in a German peace settlement and a German peace treaty provision concerning the possibility of German unification. This could be done either in the form of an agreed joint statement of the powers concerned, or such a provision could be included in a peace treaty with the GDR. As to the Soviet position on unification, it was well known to the United States; the Soviet Union believed that reunification was a matter for the two German states to resolve.

Mr. Gromyko then said he wished to stress that when a solution of the West Berlin problem was found on a basis corresponding to the interests of peace and the interests of the GDR sovereignty, and when other related problems, on which there had been some rapprochement between the US and the USSR, were also resolved, then actually there would remain no problem on which the two countries were in direct confrontation. Under those circumstances disarmament would also be easier to solve, particularly in view of the invigorated international situation which would then prevail, and particularly in Europe. Mr. Gromyko said that those were the views of the Soviet Government concerning a German peace settlement and the question of West Berlin.

The President said he knew that the Secretary and Mr. Gromyko had discussed the Berlin problem for many months; thus the USSR was familiar with our position. Also, he, the President, had discussed this problem with Mr. Gromyko here at the White House in September of last year. The US, the President emphasized, was anxious to work out mutually satisfactory procedures on access. The US had made several proposals on this point, and the USSR had made some too. However, the matter which was of greatest concern to us was that of the withdrawal of Western forces. West Berlin was not a NATO base and the Western forces there had no offensive capabilities. The United States desired that West Berlin not be used as a base for subversion. However we were unable to withdraw our forces and thus endanger the freedom of West Berlin. We were prepared to engage in a dialogue in November, but this of course involved our friends, including the French. However on the question of withdrawing the Western forces from West Berlin we were in disagreement. As to other matters, the President said he thought they should continue to be explored; these matters included access, both air and ground, the role and the juridical status of forces in West Berlin, etc. All of these matters could be discussed. However there could be no discussion of the presence of Western forces, which was a matter of survival; thus we disagreed on that point. If the US were to accept what the Soviet Union had suggested, i.e., if we were to withdraw our forces, the city and access to it would be under complete control of East Germany, and East Germany could also control movement of persons and goods. Under such conditions the city could no longer remain free; our

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commitments would become invalid, and we would have withdrawn from the positions the US and the West had taken for many years. The President said he did not believe that the Soviet proposal would guarantee the security of West Berlin, and its freedom could not be maintained under such conditions.

Mr. Gromyko said he wished to comment on one particular remark by the President. He said that the Soviet Union had tried to dispel the apprehensions and suspicions voiced by the US Government concerning the creation of a free and demilitarized city of West Berlin. The President had said that if the Soviet proposal were to be accepted West Berlin would come under the control of the GDR and that the social order of West Berlin would be threatened by this. Mr. Gromyko asserted that there was no reason for such fears, or doubts, or suspicions, because the USSR was prepared to undertake solemn guarantees, together with the US and the other Western Powers and also with the UN, insuring respect for the status of West Berlin. He professed not to be able to understand why the President believed that the collective weight and prestige of those nations or the weight and prestige of the UN would not constitute sufficient guarantees of what the President called the freedom of West Berlin. As to access, Mr. Gromyko said that there was no problem here. The Soviet Union favored unrestricted access to West Berlin as a free and demilitarized city; it was in favor of unrestricted ties between that city and the outer world, and it was in favor of the development of trade and cultural relations with that city. In the course of the US/USSR exchanges of views, the Soviet Government had tried to convince the United States that it was in favor of the strictest possible guarantees in this respect.

The President said that he appreciated this, but emphasized that if the Soviet Union desired to continue to permit the people of West Berlin to choose their fate, he did not see why withdrawal of Western forces was of any importance. Contrary to Soviet assertions, West Berlin was not a NATO base and our troops there were symbolic. Since we had said that this point was vital to us, we failed to see why it should not be possible to work out access with our troops remaining in West Berlin. The President reiterated that those troops were a symbolic guarantee of the freedom of the city, and that of course was of great significance. If the Soviet Union desired to let the West Berlin population choose its own government, then presence of those troops should not create any problem. Those troops were not endangering the security of the Soviet Union or any other country in East Europe.

Mr. Gromyko said that it was well known, and the President would not deny this, that presence of Western forces in West Berlin was a result of World War II. Both Western and Soviet troops had come to Germany and West Berlin as occupation troops as a result of the defeat of Nazi Germany.

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However, he wished to point out with the President's permission that the most dangerous slice of the last war had remained in West Berlin in the form of Western forces. The President was of course right in saying--and Mr. Khrushchev had agreed on this point with the President at Vienna-- that the Western forces in West Berlin could play no military role. However this made the Soviet Union wonder all the more why, despite this fact, the West still insisted on maintaining those forces. Moreover, it should be noted that even a small number of troops can represent a danger of war.

Mr. Gromyko continued that he wished to emphasize once again-- and this was also Mr. Khrushchev's view--that if the question of West Berlin were to be resolved on a mutually satisfactory basis, there would remain no other questions on which our two states were at loggerheads, with the possible exception of disarmament. If such a solution were found, the peoples of our two countries and of the world at large would sigh in relief and would thank the President and Mr. Khrushchev for their efforts in bringing about such a success.

After some discussion of certain other matters, Mr. Gromyko said that in conclusion he wished to state that Mr. Khrushchev had instructed him to convey to the President Mr. Khrushchev's belief that it would be useful if the Heads of the Government of the United States and the USSR met to discuss the problems which were dividing the two Powers, and first and foremost the question of a German peace treaty and of West Berlin. If Mr. Khrushchev should have an opportunity of doing so, he would come to New York in the latter part of November in connection with the General Assembly. Thus, what was meant was the possibility of Khrushchev's coming after the U.S. elections.

The President said that if Mr. Khrushchev should come to the United States he would be glad to meet with him again. However, the President thought that it would be a mistake to describe such a meeting as dealing with a peace treaty and West Berlin, since others were involved in these matters and more formal discussions would be required. Thus if the Chairman should come, he would be glad to meet with him and discuss any questions, without however attempting to organize an agenda.

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